

Mountain Goat Viewing Opportunities

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Central Utah — Winter is the time of year when deer and elk pack their bags and head for the winter range along the lower foothills and other species of wildlife curl up and sleep through this cold and somber season awaiting the warmth of Spring. At times, it appears that the mountains themselves are void of life. However, if you take a closer look at the rocky ledges of the mountains, a magical thing can happen. That patch of snow you have been staring at through your binoculars may mysteriously stand up and move to feed on a patch of mountain mahogany!

One of the most challenging yet rewarding wildlife viewing opportunities is to take a spotting scope and binoculars and try to find one of Utah's bearded white mountain goats. The state of Utah has over 400 mountain goats within its borders. About 300 goats are found between Mt. Olympus and Provo Peak. Many people don't realize that in just a matter of minutes they can take a short drive and be watching one of the most graceful and surefooted animals on the earth. Many people have never seen a mountain goat and in some cases they are literally viewable from their back yards!

Two of the best viewing locations include the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon and Provo Canyon. The Park & Ride area at the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon is a good location to view goats on both sides of the canyon but it is discouraged parking there during the busy ski weekends.

Provo Canyon hosts a nice population of 40 to 80 goats that winter on the north side of the canyon. Best viewing in Provo canyon is at any pull-off or parking area between Canyon Glen and Bridal Veil Falls where parking is not prohibited. DWR Wildlife Biologist Grant Jense recommends spending most of your time glassing the rocky ledges and waiting for movement among the rocks. "They will sit for a while and then walk around for a while looking for browse. If you are patient, you will eventually catch some movement and then be able to see many goats," says Jense.

Mountain goats were first introduced into Utah in 1967 when six goats were transplanted from the Cascade Mountain range from Washington and relocated in the Twin Peak area between Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons. Other locations for goats include the Uinta Mountains near Bald Mountain, Willard Peak northeast of Ogden, and the Tushar Mountain range east of Beaver.